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# A HILL PRAYER.

Marian Warner Wildman



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# A HILL PRAYER

## And Other Poems

MARIAN WARNER WILDMAN

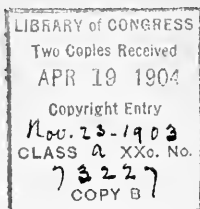


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To My Father and Mother

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*Although I cannot tell it all—*

*The dear green boughs that toss and swing,  
Where leafy shadows shift and fall,  
On leafy sunlight wavering;*

*Although the music of the stream*

*Has secrets that I cannot guess;  
Although the poetry I dream  
I have no language to express;*

*Although they never could be told—*

*The wondrous thoughts that dim mine eyes  
When at the evening I behold  
The golden glory of the skies;*

*Yet must I sing. The love and pain*

*That yearn to find one perfect word,  
And fail, and try, and fail again,  
In broken accents, all unheard,*

*May yet from out their silence lend*

*One tiny note to swell the throng  
Of choiring voices that ascend  
In rhapsodies of praise and song.*



## A HILL PRAYER

Here, where the light falls shimmering on the  
grass,

Whose long green blades are bending to the  
breeze;

Here with the flowers and butterflies and bees;  
Here with the fair, slow-drifting clouds that pass  
And change the wavering light to wavering  
shade;

Here, where my ancient oak-trees, rising, yield  
Their organ-musings to the strong, soft wind;—

Here, O thou Soul my soul has tried to find  
In man-made temples, in the open field,  
Down the hushed forest's leafy colonnade;

Thou for whose footprints I have searched the  
shore

That lies along the ever calling sea;  
O Thou to whom I prayed that I might see  
But once Thy truth's Truth—know what I adore!

Here with Thy creatures, flower and leaf and  
bird,

That share with me this holy hillside peace,  
Grant me from my long questioning release,  
And hear my new prayer—leave the rest unheard.

Forgive the boldness of a heart that sought  
To know Thy name, or see Thine unveiled  
face;

Forgive me that I tried to find a place  
To worship Thee, O Thou from out whose  
thought

This perfect bud came, and the whispering leaves  
That bid me, "Be of comfort: Some One knows  
And cherishes the smallest flower that grows,  
And feels the trouble if a bird heart grieves."

Forget my old presumption; for I dared  
To question Thy great purpose; dared to  
doubt  
If God dwelt in my fancy or without,  
Or if there were or were not One who cared.

And even while I prayed, I feared to see,  
Lest lifted veil should show an empty shrine;  
I dared to call my dreams of beauty mine,  
And half believed they were too fair to be.

My dreams too fair to be? The red-wing's notes  
Up from the marsh in breezy freshness ring;  
Among the willow-trees the vireos sing  
Their sweet, repeated warblings; yonder floats  
A snow of petals from a hawthorn-tree;

Subtile and sweet the wild grape blossoms throw  
Their meed of perfume to the breath of May,  
And every sluggish little bud that lay  
Inert and joyless through the night of snow  
Bursts like my heart in springtime ecstasy.

My dreams too fair to be? O Thou whose love  
Dreams beauty into being, makes it true—  
Those far white clouds that float across the  
blue,  
The sweet spring day here and that hidden  
dove;

I ask no more to see, to understand.  
Not yet, O God, not yet the unveiled face!  
Let me through many springtimes search the  
    grace  
In one of these the marvels of Thy hand.

What Thou art, I may never comprehend,  
Or whether Love or Law or God or Power;  
What I am, in the passing of this hour  
Has ceased to matter; here my strivings end,  
And here, in blessing Thee, my soul is blest.

Not for some far-off heaven's higher bliss,  
Not for some destiny that waits for me,  
Not for dream-gloried worlds that are to be,  
But for the simple loveliness of this;  
Close to this throbbing hillside's fragrant  
    breast,

I love Thee, with a beauty-broken heart,  
And worship Thee, be whatsoe'er Thou art.

## BLIND

This much I know. Before the sky grew dark,  
When died the sunlight like a candle blown,  
And left my soul to strain and grope and hark,  
A captive, locked in some black tower alone;

Before the curtain fell that shut me out  
From all I had been, all I hoped to be,—  
There was a glad, green world; a joyous shout  
Of strong winds blowing o'er a laughing sea;

And there were green-gold fields of heading  
wheat,  
That ran and rippled in the passing breeze;  
And there were frail pink roses, wild and sweet;  
And there were mist-blue hills and tossing  
trees;

And over all, a brooding heaven blue,  
Where martins circled in the sunset light,  
And where the crying killdeers flashed and flew,  
And great stars shot their glory through the  
night.

All this I know. And for the power divine  
To dream such pictures on the midnight walls  
Of this unwindowed prison-tomb of mine,  
I bless the Hand from which the blessing falls.

I am content, O God! content to know  
The sky still shines above my sightless eyes;  
That though my feet down darkened pathways  
go,  
Unseen, the Brightness round about me lies.

## A CYCLE OF THE YEAR

### I THE SNOW STORM

First the hush fell, when the north wind,  
Bleak and bitter, ceased to blow;  
Then from out the sky's abundance  
Came the snow.

Faded is the winter landscape;  
Russet field and leafless tree  
Vanish, blotted out—forgotten  
Utterly.

White the sky that closes o'er us;  
White as wool the earth below;  
White the air with countless legions  
Of the snow.

Hemlocks droop beneath their burden;  
Dim and veiled by stormy hosts,  
Loom the slender, bending birches,  
Gray as ghosts.

So the night comes, and the darkness  
Shuts the world out; but we know,  
Ever softer, deeper, stiller,  
Drifts the snow.

### II ON WINTER NIGHTS

Without—the dark, the bitter storm, the cold;  
Within—the firelight's glow of ruddy gold,  
To dream with me until the night grows old.

Slow, spiral wreaths of curling vapor rise,  
As frail as clouds that drift o'er August skies,  
Or purple haze on autumn hills that lies.

Flames blue as moonlight round the gray logs  
creep;  
Bright sun rays, stored in sweet, dead summers,  
leap  
Once more alive from their dark prisoned sleep.

And now the chimney's velvet dusk receives  
Gold sparks, like some gay firefly swarm that  
weaves  
Fantastic webs of light among the leaves.

The fire's subdued soliloquizing seems  
A breeze that through the waving branches  
dreams,  
Or gentle murmuring of woodland streams.

Soft, incoherent notes the gray logs sing,  
Crooned wood-talk of some unforgotten spring  
When they grew green in tender burgeoning—

The snap of twigs where some shy creature  
stirred,  
The quick, low strain the mounting sap once  
heard  
And learned by heart from some sweet forest  
bird.

So tells my winter fire its summer tale,  
Until, like autumn leaves, the red coals fail,  
Beneath an ashen frost grown cold and pale.



### III CONSPIRACY

Old hoary king, with diamond-cruised robe  
And ermined mantle,—tell me, were the trees  
Caught whispering some treason with the wind?  
As: "Hark you, brother! he is growing old,  
"And rules no longer with might of yore.  
"See how the daffodils that used to cower  
"In terror lest he spy them, now put up  
"Their slender leaves unhindered. Hear the  
birds  
"That, tentative, the songs of April try."

And then did they, the traitors, lower bend  
And whisper to the wind that ought to pass  
Yet lingered, listening, curious: how one,  
(The prince, they named him) had sent messen-  
gers  
To say he came with overwhelming force  
To wrest the crown and sceptre from the king?

It must have been high treason, wicked trees!  
For lo!—the king last night sent out his slaves,  
Rain, Sleet and Frost, and bound your every  
twig  
In shining fetters that now weigh you down,  
You mad conspirators against his throne!  
Old cruel monarch! how he laughs to see  
The forest stooping 'neath its gleaming weight,  
Small saplings bending helpless to the ground,  
And all the world of boughs and twigs and vines  
A dazzling, rainbow-flashing fairy-land!  
How like a maiden, for her beauty sent  
To plead her people's cause unto their lord,  
That silver birch-tree bows her graceful head,

All glorious with jewels like a queen's,  
As if she begged for mercy and release  
From these so beauteous yet so irksome bonds!

Laugh loud, old noisy king! Your frosty breath  
But serves to shake new radiance from their  
chains;  
And laugh yet louder, lest you overhear  
Your captives, that with icy tinklings lean  
To pass the word a breeze has smuggled  
through,—  
"Have courage, for the prince is just at hand!"

#### IV SPRING SIGNS

By the northward-winged legions is it told!  
By each blade of grass upspringing from the  
mold;

By the verdant, velvet freshness of the wheat;  
By the perfume of things growing, faint and  
sweet;

By the glow of golden cowslips in the swale;  
By the waking of the wind-flowers in the vale;

By the blackbirds' liquid gossip in the trees;  
By the far-off note of bluebirds on the breeze;

By the blushing of peach orchards, all alive  
With the whirl of wings late prisoned in the hive;

By the thrill of gipsy longing in the breast;  
By our vague and nameless rapture of unrest;

By all glories of the vast awakening—  
This is April! this is Easter! this is Spring!

## V IN PROTEST

Slowly—but more slowly lift the veil!  
My lavish, all too lavish mistress Spring!  
Pause, lest you overwhelm me with your gifts!  
Pause! for I perish, drowning in a sea  
Of beauty, gathering wave on wave, that rolls  
Yet higher on the unresisting shore  
Of old earth's winter barrenness, and breaks  
In foam of orchard bloom along the land!

## VI LITTLE PICTURES IN SUMMER

### *Honey Harvest*

A brook that sparkling in the sunlight sings;  
A swaying spray of graceful columbine;  
A humming-bird, light-poised on whirring wings  
To drain the last sweet drop of golden wine.

### *June Meadows*

A world underneath of white daisies;  
A world overhead of blue skies;  
And nothing between but a flashing of gold  
From the breast of a lark as it flies.

### *Silver Maples*

A sky of deepest, rarest, summer hue;  
A host of little leaves, all still and green;  
A wind that wakes, and lo! a sudden sheen  
Like myriad coins, new-minted, 'gainst the blue.

## *Before a Storm*

Vast thunder-heads that to the zenith rise,  
Like snowy Alps athwart the noonday skies;  
And one great eagle, spurning earth, that seeks  
To lose himself among their dazzling peaks!

### VII THE END OF A DROUGHT

"Bob White!" the quails are calling;  
The clouds hang low and gray,  
And from the hot, still meadows  
The sun is shut away.

Upon the vague horizon,  
The misty woodland seems  
Like the enchanted forest  
I visit in my dreams—

So far, and so mysterious,  
Gray-veiled by distant showers,  
The borders of another  
And fairer world than ours.

A tree-toad breaks the stillness;  
A sudden breeze upsprings,  
And bears the grateful fragrance  
Of rain upon its wings.

Now fades my grove enchanted;  
Now fade the fields of grain;  
Now fast across the meadows  
Yet nearer sweeps the rain.

Drink deep, O parching country!  
O flowers, be of cheer!

Lift up your cups and fill them;  
The rain—the rain is here!

VIII IN AN OLD ORCHARD

Oh sweet, calm passing of the summer day!  
On orchard grass the shadows longer lie;  
The insect chorus swells and dies away  
And swells again in sweet monotony.

Each bird is silent, busy with its brood,  
Save when a pewee from his leafy lair  
Repeats his peaceful song in pensive mood—  
Then darts to seize some gauze-wing unaware.

Through waving boughs I see the slow clouds  
pass;  
The breeze that nods the clover fans my cheek;  
And with the dancing shadows on the grass  
My fancy plays at games of hide-and-seek.

Here is no fret beneath the orchard trees;  
No great ambition thrills my indolence;  
My soul, contented with the world it sees,  
Cares not to question "Why?" or "Whence?"

To-morrow I will reason. Let me be  
For once a simple worshiper, to lay  
My idle hours of idle reverie  
Upon the altar of the passing day.

Come tell me, O vagabonds true,  
 What awakens our old gipsy yearning,  
 So soon as September grows blue  
 With the smoke of the far forest-burning?

When the vervain is slender and tall,  
 And the cardinal flares in the hollow,  
 Whose voices are those we hear call,  
 That bid the whole wander-world follow?

Do we care that the springtime is dead?  
 Do we grieve that the summer is dying?  
 Do we sigh that December's ahead?  
 Ah no,—we've no time for the sighing!

We are off, with our woes left behind!  
 Hearts as light as the thistle-bird's singing!  
 We are off, with the sweet, smoky wind,  
 Down the dew-sprinkled wander-ways swing-  
 ing.

The spider-webs, silken and gemmed,  
 On the dripping green grass are a-shimmer;  
 By banks of bright jewel-weed hemmed,  
 The little brown meadow-brooks glimmer.

The wild morning-glories, milk-white,  
 To the briars and thickets are clinging,  
 Where dusty-winged butterflies light,  
 And pause for a space from their winging.

Will the butterflies die of the frost?  
 And the flowers?—Ah yes, we remember,  
 But heed not! The future's well lost  
 In the shrouding, blue haze of September!

X OCTOBER SONG

Oh these are the days when the hills are blue,  
And the forests are crimson and russet and  
gold,  
And the dead leaves fall,  
And the black crows call,  
As they wing their flight over woodland and  
wold!

Oh these are the days when the bluebirds sing,  
A faint, distant echo of dead April days,  
And a soft haze lies  
Over earth and skies,  
And the asters are purple along the highways!

The corn is all cut and the pumpkins lie  
In a great golden heap on the granary floor,  
And the apples red  
On the trees overhead,  
Are juicy and ripe from the skin to the core.

Oh these are the days when the squirrels and  
boys,  
From the peep of the dawn till the last of the  
light,  
Are at work like bees  
In the hickory trees,  
As they gather their stores for a cold winter's  
night.

Oh these are the golden October days,  
With their falling of leaves and their gay har-  
vest cheer,  
And their smoky haze,  
And their dreamful ways,—  
The loveliest, mellowest days of the year!

## XI NOVEMBER

Oh softly tread upon the withered leaves!  
Wake not the sleeping dryads from their  
dream

Of summer skies.  
Mark how the wind through naked branches  
grieves—

How cold on fretted twigs the pallid gleam  
Of sunshine lies!

In fitful gusts the wind now snatches high  
The rattling leaves, to mimic cyclones whirled  
In joyless mirth;  
Now, wanton, flings them down again to lie  
All brown and by the frost's cold fingers curled,  
Upon the earth.

The forest harkens, while the gray-boled trees  
That lately clad in rustling verdure rose,  
Now, summer done,  
Await, with patience born of centuries,  
The coming of the wintry days, and snow's  
Oblivion.

## XII A WINTER AFTERGLOW

"Let there be light!"—a Voice saith. And behold!

From cloud to cloud the radiant tidings fly;  
Above the naked trees and bitter wold,  
Above the bleak snow-meadows, gray and cold,  
A vast transfiguration thrills the sky.



Pale gold from west to east all heaven grows;  
Each wraith of mist is touched with amber  
light;

A towered Valhalla in the sunset glows,  
All gold, pure gold; till lo! —a flush of rose  
Steals suddenly across the turrets bright,

Absorbs, transforms and glorifies the whole,  
As when in some majestic symphony,  
The master-music of a master-soul,  
The chords yet stronger and serener roll,  
Then pause, triumphant, breathless, ere they  
die.

So for a space the ruddy glories wait;  
Then back from east, south, north, the rose-  
light turns;  
Back in the mother west to concentrate,  
Back to one blazing cloud all roseate,  
That like a crimson banner flares and burns.

Oh solemn passing of the winter day!  
Now, still as when some beauteous spirit dies,  
Through purple, violet, mist-blue and gray,  
The fiery pageant fades to dusk away.  
One white star trembles lucent in the skies.

## GOD'S WAY

### *In Memory of President McKinley*

"This is God's way!"—O great America,  
On whom God's hand has fallen heavily,  
Read yet again the last words of your chief,  
And find therein not faith, not trust alone,  
Not simple bowing of a will to God,  
But something more—a vision, prophecy!

Our way, could we have chosen, would have been  
To let the risen sun go down serene  
Into the west, so gradual and slow  
We scarce should feel the changes, scarce regret  
The sunset passing of an ended day,  
Since noon was half forgotten ere night came.  
God's way it was to strike from out the sky  
Our noonday sun and leave the zenith bare,  
That by the bitter darkness we might know  
How bright had been the shining that we  
mourned,  
The light too little heeded while it shone.

Our way it is to shrink from present pain,  
From that stern travail of whose throes is born  
Some good our darkened vision fails to see.  
For pain is evil to our finite thought,  
And sorrow a destroying flame that sweeps  
To ruthless ruin all our hopes and loves.

To God, our pain is but an instrument  
With which to work fulfilment of His plan.  
To God, our sorrow is the holy fire  
By which is burnt into our anguished hearts  
The lessons that, if learned less bitterly,

Had been forgotten ere we saw their worth.  
Upon our hearts, America, by fire,  
The fame of thy dead hero had been burned ;  
And in our loss, behold !—a two-fold gain !

This first: we see more clearly than before  
How great is simple goodness ; how sublime  
Are knightly courtesy, a life unstained,  
A will that falters not before its God,  
A loyal heart that loves its fellow-men.

And this the second lesson, dark and dread,  
In fiery letters written on our souls :  
Not one man's sin this crime that blots the white  
Of our fair century's just opened page !  
It is the sin of every age and land  
Where greed of gain treads mercy underfoot ;  
It is the sin of every narrow heart  
That harbors vice and fosters ignorance,  
And sows among its brethren seeds of hate ;  
My sin and thine, if we have failed to do  
Our part to haste the coming of the day  
When love shall rule the nations ; thine and mine,  
If we have set no hand against the power  
Of vice and folly, raised no healing cup  
To lips that, parched by poverty and pain,  
At last have opened to curse God and Man,  
And hail the lurid dawn of anarchy !

O world—O stricken nation, hear and heed  
This two-fold teaching of a martyr death !

“This is God's way !” Within the pregnant words  
A meaning yet more deep and vital lies ;  
As if, no longer darkly, through a glass,  
But face to face, our dying leader saw

The mighty import of God's purposing.  
God's way, mysterious, past finding out,  
Is this : to link foul cause to noble end ;  
To make Man's vice, his folly, cowardice,  
A blind, unwitting instrument of good !

The cruelty that bade wise Socrates  
Put to his lips the bitter cup of death,  
Had for its offspring words the tenderest  
And bravest that old Athens left the world.  
The vile ingratitude, the treachery,  
That make the name of Judas a reproach,  
Yet gave the work of Christ its final crown.  
So with the crime that lately has laid low  
Our beauty in high places,—though the sin  
Be black and grievous, from it shall be born  
A lasting good unto the commonwealth :  
Ideals nobler, government more just,  
And more of loving kindness among men.

Thus from the two-fold lesson, writ in fire,  
Another and a mightier truth is wrung :  
Not good alone, but evil, pain and sin,  
Have part and meaning in God's perfect plan ;  
And evil, under God's directing hand,  
Shall work its own undoing, soon or late,  
When that which seemed but jarring dissonance  
Sweeps on to perfect harmony at last.

Rise then, America ! Be brave and strong  
To face the future ! raise your stricken head,  
And say with him you loved, who lately passed  
Through that dark valley where the Shadow lies,  
"This is the way of God—His will be done !"

## THE PHILOSOPHER

*After reading Spinoza's "Ethica"*

The one who loveth wisdom! Scorn him not  
Because he walks apart from common men;  
Nor blame him if your anguish-darkened lot  
Wakes not his heart to answering throbs  
again;

Nor pity him, because the blessedness  
Of human fellowship and earthly tie,  
The pride of power, the ancient, holy stress  
And war of good on ill, he putteth by.

For most of us are strife and passion meant,  
And life by struggle and by conquest blessed;  
We seek the truth, toil-stained; with garments  
rent  
By thorns, through darkness, we pursue our  
quest.

But he, self-lost, adoring, sees endure  
God's law alone, immutable and sure.

## A PARALLEL

A fragile shell upon the ocean wide,  
Wave-hurried, hurled by the unknowing sea;  
A slave to endless mutability;  
Till, rolled and tumbled by the heedless tide,  
It loses all the roughnesses that hide  
The lovely tints that underneath them be;  
Then by the inconstant waves cast finally  
Upon the beach to lie, storm-beautified.

A woman's heart, by dreary stress of fate  
Tossed like the sea-shell, with no hope of rest  
Upon the ever-changing, changeless drift  
Of circumstance, till lo!—the surges lift  
And leave her, sorrow-perfect, in the breast  
That waits, as for the shell the warm sands wait.

## AT THE GOLDEN GATE

*To Robert Louis Stevenson*

In from the ocean the sea-gulls are winging,  
Flashes of white on the heavens' far blue;  
In from the west they come crying and calling—  
Ah, but they cry us no tidings of you!

In from the west course the great ocean rollers,  
Curving and combing in wind-driven spray,  
Bearing no more in their thunderous bosoms,  
News of the one who has vanished away.

Out of our fair Golden Gate you departed;  
Ruddy your sails when we looked on them last;  
Leaving us, lonely-eyed, gazing far seaward,  
Gayly, O light-hearted rover, you passed.

Will you come back to us out of the sunset  
Never again? Is your journeying done?  
Or are you sailing, yet farther and farther,  
Down the long trail of the westering sun?

Still from the west the white sea-gulls are flying;  
Still the great winds range the wide, sunlit  
blue;

But the sea-voices, all empty and meaningless,  
Call to your lovers no message from you.

## A LYRIC OF FALLING LEAVES

They cry as they fly:

"We are free—we are free—we are free!  
Old boughs where we hung, good-bye!  
You clung to us long, for you bore us;  
Naught now to your arms shall restore us;  
At last we are free—we are free!

"In the spring we were born,  
In the year's blithe morn,  
And the forest rejoiced at our birth;  
And the sunbeams played  
All day with the shade  
We myriad made on the earth.

"We were little and fragile and tender and green,  
(How loud is the call of the golden-wing!)  
And the musical rain and the glittering sheen  
Of the great white stars could filter between  
And drip to the earth below.  
(How wind-flowers shake to the breezes that  
pass!  
And oh—the spring-beauties that powder the  
grass  
Like a flurry of pink-flushed snow!)  
Sweet, sweet was the smell of the world in  
spring!  
Sweet was the sound and the touch of the spring!  
And we danced where we hung,  
And we sang as we clung;  
And fairer and broader and greener we grew,  
The long glad weeks of the Maytime through;  
Nor knew we at all that we were not free.



“Was it June?  
Was it oriole’s rune  
As he flashed like a flower of gold?  
Was it something the low wind told,  
Some night when the air was wine,  
And the moon was ashine  
In the blue vault, dark and vast,  
And we held up our hands to be filled  
With the pure white light that she spilled  
From her silvery urn as she passed?  
Was it call of the sea  
From a sea-gull’s throat?  
Was it thrush’s note?  
Was it breath from the fields of grain  
That rippled and broke in the blast  
Like the waves of the windy main?  
Was it hope? Was it prophecy?

“One knows! Not we—not we!  
But we knew, on a day, like the young  
Of the lark that grow tired of the nest  
And stir in a dawning unrest,  
We knew that we were not free!  
Not free like the gold-finch above us that sung—  
Not free like the clouds in the sky—  
Not free like the winds that go by!

“Were we sad that we were not free?  
Nay—nay!  
It was sweet to stay;  
And Life was good  
In the dear green wood;  
And we whispered and fluttered and sang as of  
yore—

But we dreamed, which we never had done before;  
We dreamed of liberty.

“ ‘Some day you shall go!’ they said—  
The branches, our gray-breasted mothers—  
‘Some day when the summer is dead!’  
How closely they held us, O brothers!  
We cried to a wind that went through:  
‘Some day we shall journey with you!’  
‘Some day!’ sighed our sorrowful mothers.

“And all through the summer we hung there,  
Content in our curtained green peace;  
But all through the weeks that we clung there,  
We dreamed of our promised release.

“It has come as we dreamed it, O brothers!  
One passed with his torch in the night;  
And to-day we are all alight  
With tintings and colorings manifold,  
With orange, vermilion and gold—  
The garments prepared for our flight.

“One passed in the night;  
And he bade us: ‘Be free!  
‘Lean now on the wings of the blast  
‘If you will!  
‘Or fall on the hurrying rill  
‘And ride on its breast to the sea!  
‘Behold—you are free at last!’

“Oh the joy of our liberty, brothers!  
O sorrowing mothers,  
Farewell—we are gone from the breast!  
We follow the call of unrest!

"We ride on the winds that are blowing,  
Unheeding, unknowing  
The place they are going.  
O'er the shivering grass  
We race with the shadows of clouds as they pass.  
We rise—we rise—  
In the arms of the gale!  
Against the gray skies  
We drive and we sail!  
O brothers, the joy of our being free!  
Our life was sweet on the gray old tree,  
But our death, our death is our liberty!"

### UNDAUNTED

Far out on the sea, where the gray gulls play  
And the silver-flashing breakers shine,  
A white, white sail on the sea verge lay;  
And I said to my soul, "It shall be a sign,  
"For good or for ill, of the hope of mine,  
"That lies, new-born, in my heart to-day."

Then over the dim horizon line,  
And farther and farther away from me,  
I watched the sail, like a gull's wing, shine  
And fail and vanish utterly.  
But I laughed in the face of the empty sea,  
And turned me to look for a better sign!

## THE GHOST OF APRIL

There is a time, ere yet the chill November  
Has fallen bitterly on mead and hill,  
When April's ghost comes back to haunt her lovers,  
And make them dream that it is springtime still.

Across the sky frail cloudlets float serenely;  
The groves are veiled in misty, purple haze;  
And in the fresh, sweet wind, a hint of promise  
Stirs subtle memories of April days.

The corn is cut, and like to Indian wigwams  
The rustling, russet shocks in long rows stand;  
Great yellow pumpkins light the sombre stubble,  
And bounteous plenty broods o'er all the land.

The orchards, heavy with their weight of ripeness,  
The vineyards, fragrant with their clustered store,  
The haylofts, heaped unto the great gray rafters,  
The golden wheat-bins—plenty broodeth o'er.

By all these signs 'tis autumn; yet the marshes  
Again are faintly vocal; robins sing;  
And hark! the meadow-lark's clear, silver bugle  
As joyous rings as from the fields of spring.

And sweetest, saddest, fullest of spring haunting,  
The bluebirds' warble: "Far—ah far away!"  
As if they too were lost in tender dreaming  
Of some fair, unforgotten April day;

Of that dear April day, when love and being  
Were blent together into perfect bliss ;  
Of that fond day, when Earth, the sleeping princess,  
Awoke to rapture at the prince's kiss.

To-day I found white violets in flower,  
Beside a roadway fringed with tarnished gold  
And faded purple asters. O spring's darlings !  
Why this return, with autumn growing old ?

O birds of spring ! O April hints and meanings !  
That come again, when summer flowers are dead,  
And summer birds, that thrilled the year's green  
noontide,  
To far-off groves in other lands are fled ;

O April birds and ghostly April whispers,  
That bless and sadden these October days !  
You send our thoughts, our memories, our long-  
ings,  
Springward again, by two divergent ways.

Backward we look, across the perfect summer  
That wrought fulfilment of the pledge of spring ;  
Forward we look, beyond the desert winter,  
To April's songs and April's burgeoning.

O April birds ! O hints of April promise !  
O autumn violets ! Is this then all  
You wait to teach to us who are your lovers,  
Now April's self is dead and it is fall ?

Shall we, when Life's gold harvest has been garnered,  
(Is this your deeper meaning ?) shall we hear

Thus, April's ghost, again the tender echoes  
Of our lost spring across the vanished year?

Beyond the frost (is this your deepest meaning?)  
Behind the death-veil that the Father willed,  
Wait there for us new springtimes? other Aprils?  
A vaster promise that shall be fulfilled?

### A BEECH-WOOD IN OCTOBER

Beneath the ancient beeches, cloth of gold  
For Autumn's regal passing has been laid.  
Gold sunbeams pierce the thinning golden  
shade,  
Where wider glimpses of blue sky unfold.

No bird sings here; and never light wind blows  
To stir the leafy curtains, golden brown,  
But still the ripened leaves drift slowly down,  
And still the carpet softer, thicker grows.

Among the beeches Autumn does not die  
In crimson passion or in scarlet pain;  
Here only peace and golden silence reign,  
June dreams forgotten—winter fears put by.

So would I die, O beeches! When at last  
My days are numbered like your ripened  
leaves,  
I would not be as one who idly grieves,  
And mourns the glories of the summer past.

In peace and golden silence I would lie,  
Still gazing upward through the thinning gold,  
Until the last leaf fell, and there—behold!  
Beyond the lifeless boughs, God's open sky!

## THE GOSPEL OF THE TREES

There is a gospel written in the trees,  
And I can hear it when the musing wind  
Drifts lingering, mysterious and soft  
Among the close-lapped leaves that rise and fall;  
And I can see it, when the morning sun  
Turns all the green to tender, lucent gold,  
And clear-cut shadows fall from leaf to leaf,  
And shift upon each other over me;  
And when at times, in utter weariness,  
I seek the shelter of the summer woods,  
The trees seem all to bend and breathe on me  
Its benediction from their outstretched boughs.  
Beneath some ancient beech I sit me down,  
And lean my face against the smooth gray bark,  
And close my eyes,—and then a low voice speaks  
That seems not all the breeze, nor yet the birds  
That lisp and call in tender undertones.

“Be calm, O weary mortal! Let your life  
“Take root so deep in God’s serenity,  
“No storm can break nor drought can wither  
    you.  
“Let all your close-hid buds of springtime burst,  
“And let the opened leaflets spread and grow,  
“Until your life is clad in loveliness,  
“And birds that shunned your barren winter  
    boughs  
“Come close into your breast to brood and sing.  
“Cast down your passions and your selfish fears,  
“As we in autumn cast our painted leaves  
“And bare our limbs undaunted to the frost.  
“Then, when the bitter winds of wintertime  
“Blow cold and colder on your shivering soul,

“Fear not! The love that shields the leafless  
trees,  
“And guards their boughs with moss against the  
north,  
“Will shield your naked heart and keep it warm,  
“And save you till the coming of the spring!”



## FROM THE DEAD

When my dust is dust again,  
And my face no more hath place  
In the changing ranks of men;

When my soul hath taken flight;  
When my clay is laid away,  
Mould'ring in the grave's chill night;

When all this hath come to pass,  
Then—oh then! blow soft again,  
Rippling winds that stir the grass!

Rains and snows and dews that fall  
O'er my head, awake your dead!  
From its sleep my dust recall!

Little roots that search the earth,  
Heed the cry: "Lo—here am I!  
"Dust that once knew mortal birth.

"Take me—use me, hungry root!  
"Quicken me to herb or tree,  
"Bursting bud or springing shoot.

"Lift me back into the day!  
"I would fain be bending grain,  
"Tossing bough or blooming spray,

"Violet or goldenrod,  
"Oak or pine or creeping vine,—  
"Just a green blade of the sod,

"One of myriad maple keys;  
"So to feel again Life steal  
"Through my thrilling arteries;

"So to know when in thy flight,  
"Swift and far from star to star,  
"Swerving earthward, spirit bright,

"Thou dost visit grove and plain  
"That we knew when I and you  
"Were one shape who now are twain;

"So to view again the sky;  
"Bear the beat of wintry sleet;  
"Watch the cloud-ranks filing by;

"Harken when the wood-thrush sings—  
"Once more raise my note of praise  
"In the choir of living things!"

# FROM THE HILLS OF GOLD

## I SIERRAN DAISIES

O ye who rend the earth apart  
For hidden veins of yellow gold,  
And tear her ancient-seething heart,  
For ages past grown still and cold;

Come out of all your tunnels black!  
Throw down your futile picks and drills!  
For here above, the wealth you lack  
In lavish splendor gilds the hills.

Did God Himself stoop down to say,  
You golden, thronging daisies bright,  
Just where the hidden treasure lay  
That you have found and brought to light?

What need to tear the mountain side?  
What use of toil and sweat?—Behold!  
An El Dorado glorified—  
A solid hill of yellow gold!

## II IN THE VALLEY

A wind came down the mountain side;  
And first I heard the far-off trees,  
And then the nearer ones replied  
In lofty, swelling harmonies.

Then swayed tall pines before the gale,  
Like masts at sea in stately grace;  
And last the wind filled all the vale,  
Blew sweet and strong upon my face.

### III AT SUNSET

Within this lonely, hill-imprisoned vale,  
I watch the sunlight fade and evening gray  
In dull, cold shadows settle 'neath the trees,  
Though yet the girding hills are crowned with  
light,  
Where towering pines still blaze in sunset fire.

O shades of doubt! O darkness of despair!  
So grows my valley-life dim; night is come,  
While yet my longing, lifted eyes can see,  
Far over me, the joy, the light, the hope—  
The golden glory of the vanished sun—  
God's peace upon the heights I cannot climb!

### IV SUNRISE

Far over the mountains that girdle the valley,  
To eastward the heavens are paling with light.  
Down here in their legions the dull shadows rally  
And close to defend the last stronghold of  
Night.

A shuddering wind is awake in the cedars,  
And sudden, swift fears through the foliage  
stir;  
Now marshal your forces, you ghostly gray  
leaders!  
Stand round your dark mistress—die fighting  
for her!

Too late! On the heights where the giant pines  
tower,  
Affare on their summits, a banner of gold  
Waves death to the shadows, turned craven, that  
cower,  
And sicken in crannies, and hide, and grow  
old.

From hill-crest to crest flies the light on strong  
pinions;

The valley is circled and crowned with the sun;  
Dark Night in her stronghold lies slain with her  
minions—

The reign of the conqueror Day is begun!

#### V MORNING SONG

Down the hills the sunrise light  
Slants between the lofty pines,  
Puts the purple shades to flight,  
Through the manzanitas shines;

Dapples all the river o'er,  
Flecks its clear, brown bed with gold,  
Till the pebbles, dull before,  
Shine in colors manifold.

Rays from off the sparkling stream  
On the roofing alders dance,  
Flicker, vanish, waver, gleam,  
In reflected radiance,

Till the leaves seem all aquiver,  
As at passing of a breeze,  
Though they hang above the river,  
Motionless upon the trees.

"Morning, morning, fresh and sweet!"  
Sings the river o'er the stones;  
And the shy towhees repeat,  
"Sweet!" and "Sweet!" in undertones.

Blue and breathless is the sky,  
Forecast of the heat of noon.  
Sing, O earth! the dew will dry  
On the lilies, oversoon!

#### VI SIERRAN RIVER SONG

No more, no more the fretful world for me!  
Thy sprite am I, O river! I shall lie  
All day and dream beneath this alder-tree,  
As idle as yon gold-winged butterfly,  
That floats and wavers in the velvet air,  
And drifts from flower to flower without a  
care.

Why hurry by so swiftly, rushing stream?  
There where those broad-leaved maple branches bend  
Are cool, brown shallows, and a softened gleam,  
Where light and shade in wavering circles  
blend,  
Vague fantasies by sun and leafage lent  
To woo the lazy ripples to content.

Then to the sunshine, river! Dreaming o'er,  
Glide smoothly down the shining golden sands,  
To leap in foamy raptures as before  
And, laughing, toss bright spray-gems in your  
hands.

A passing breeze the maple branches lifts,  
And every sun-flecked shadow fades and  
shifts.

The azure dragon-fly with filmy wings,  
That veers and darts and settles and is gone;  
The bright-eyed bird that in the alder sings,  
The fairy clouds, the winds that waft them on,  
Combine and mingle in a perfect whole—  
An utter restfulness that steeps my soul.

Here in the moist sand by the river's brink  
The tracks of some small forest creature show,  
That came last night your crystal draught to  
drink,  
The fresh, pure offering of the mountain snow.  
So I, O stream, who lean to you and brood,  
Drink deep of peace in this sweet solitude!

#### VII IN SUMMER MOOD

It is thus I love you best,  
O my river!  
When upon your tranquil breast  
Shadows quiver:  
Shadows falling, sifting, shifting,  
As the trees  
Yield their verdure to the lifting  
Of the breeze,

Till my curtains gold and green,  
Unresistant,  
Part to show the sky between,  
Blue and distant.  
Happily, alone together,  
You and I  
Watch the sweet midsummer weather  
Loiter by.  
As you linger, pause, and dream,  
Oft I wonder :  
Can you be the selfsame stream  
Used to thunder  
Down your swollen, snow-fed courses  
In the spring,  
With your waves, like foaming horses,  
Galloping  
O'er the rugged mountain path,  
Granite-bouldered,  
While you tore the trees in wrath,  
That you shouldered?  
Now you glide o'er sand and pebble  
Soft and slow,  
In a tender ripple-treble  
Singing low ;  
And, a slender, silver stream,  
Wind and shimmer ;  
Down through mimic cañons gleam,  
Flash and glimmer ;  
Deep among the channeled boulders  
Romp and run,  
'Neath the moss that dries and moulders  
In the sun.  
O'er your brown and shadowed pools,  
Frail wings hover ;  
And the trout in silver schools  
Dart to cover,



Starting waves in all directions  
Like a breeze—  
Shivering the green reflections  
Of the trees.  
Ah, the springtime! You and I  
Know its passion;  
But 'tis sweeter thus to lie,  
Summer fashion,  
While the leafy shadows quiver  
On your breast,  
And o'er all our world, O river,  
Broodeth rest.

#### VIII WILD PHLOX

Oh would I were painter to paint you!  
Or would I were bard to sing  
The charm of your delicate beauty,  
Bright may of our western spring!

If I were a painter, a hillside  
Should under my brushes grow,  
Where, centuries old, the dark pine-trees  
Their quivering shadows throw;

Snow-gleams from far distant Sierras  
Should flash their great trunks between;  
And under their boughs the dull tar-weed  
Should carpet the slope with green.

Then, rosy as clouds of the sunset  
And fresh with the mountain showers,  
Should bloom here and there on my canvas  
A flushing of starry flowers.

Or were I a poet, I'd sing you,  
In song that was tender, sweet,  
And fair as the fragilest cluster  
Low blossoming at my feet.

I'd liken you unto a maiden,  
Who dwells from the world apart;  
Like you, in her loveliness hiding;  
Like you, with a pure, white heart.

Because of my love I would sing you;  
And something between the lines  
Should hint of a balm-breathing fragrance  
From boughs of the sun-kissed pines;

Should whisper of far forest places  
That Spring with her glory thrills;  
Should sing of the hush and the healing  
That wait in the flower-clad hills.

#### IX A SIERRAN LULLABY

Sleep—oh sleep!  
By a trail that is wild and steep,  
The last red sunbeams climb,  
Little child, from the purple vale  
At sunset time.

Steep and wild,  
Up the forest-clad heights, O child!  
The manzanitas gray  
And the birches along the trail  
Have lost the day.

Rest—ah rest!

Now afar on the farthest crest

Great pines have caught the light!

Now they darken, the gold rays fail  
And fade to night.

Hark—oh hark!

How the wind in the pine boughs dark

A wild, sweet music thrills!

Sleep—sleep, till the stars grow pale  
Above the hills.

## A HERITAGE

All day long, the brown leaves, falling,  
I heard calling,  
Calling softly, plaintively:

"Where is she who used to love us?

"Now above us

"Broods October, her beloved. Where is she?

"All the springtime we were waiting;

"Birds were mating,

"And the violets were blue.

"All the summer,—'Is she coming?'

"Bees were humming,

"Balmy, clover-scented meadows roaming  
through.

"'Tis our golden time of dying;

"We are lying,

"Carpeting the woodland ways;

"Soon the snows will come to cover,

"Vanished lover,

"All the red and russet glory of our days."

All day long, the ripples, playing,

I heard saying

As they laughed along the sand:

"Surely he will come to-morrow!

"Shall we sorrow,

"When the one who used to seek us is at hand?

"In the hazy, golden weather,

"Is there tether

"That can hold him from the sea,

"Where the smoky breezes, swelling,

"Care dispelling,  
"Waft his boat, a skimming sea-gull, far and  
free?"

Harken, waves! and cease your calling,  
Sad leaves falling!  
They are over far to hear;  
But I know their hearts are turning  
Toward you, yearning,  
At this mellow, mystic passing of the year.

And the stars that westward wander,  
Know, far yonder,  
Girded by the ancient hills,  
Of a cradle ever swinging  
To the singing  
Of the pine boughs, and the swift Sierran rills.

In the baby soul there sleeping,  
Bud-like keeping  
All its secret beauty sealed,  
Shall the tender forest-sadness,  
The sea-gladness,  
Of our golden eastern autumn be revealed.

## A NURSERY SONG FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

Hush, children all! Lay down your heads  
Upon your pillows soft and white!  
The Christmas angels round your beds  
Will hover singing all this night.

Without, the snow lies cold and deep;  
Without, the bleak wind frets and calls;  
But here, around your happy sleep,  
The angels walk, with soft footfalls.

Your heavy lids will not uncloze  
To see their snowy, half-furled wings,  
Their trailing garments, flushed with rose  
Beneath the glow the firelight flings.

You will not see the star of light  
That o'er each angel's forehead beams,  
But something of its radiance bright  
Shall mingle with your Christmas dreams.

At dawn each silver star and wing  
Will fade and vanish quite away;  
But strains of what the angels sing  
Shall echo through your Christmas day.

Then silence—O ye children dear!  
The angels wait outside your door;  
Shut close your eyes—and you shall hear  
Their long robes trailing on the floor!

## FAIRIES

Heigho—the fairies! the little white fairies!

Fairies that dance by the light of the moon,  
Chase the red lantern the firefly carries,  
Rollick and frolic the night long in June.

Far away, faint, comes the ring of their laughter,  
Borne on a breeze they have startled from  
sleep;

Laughter that mocks me for following after,  
Trying to spy on the revels they keep.

Glint of a snowy wing—see, in the thicket!  
'Tis but a moon-flower, scentless and pale.  
Hark—a low cry like the chirp of a cricket!  
Who is it rides on the wings of the gale?

Down through the woodland their footsteps I  
follow,

Weary and footsore and clumsy and slow;  
Torn by the brambles of hillside and hollow,  
Through the sweet nights of the summer I go

Daily I vow to give up the vain quest of them;  
Nightly I break the wise vow that I made,  
Hoping 'gainst hope I may yet get the best of  
them,  
Sometime repay them the pranks they have  
played;

Sometime steal up to them ere they can spy me,  
(Oh for some fern seed to drop in my shoe!)  
Hide in the leaves there with none to deny me,  
Find out at last what it is that they do.

*Do they string dewdrops to hang on the flowers?*

*Do they bring toadstools and sit in a ring?*

*Do they have balls in the moon-lighted bowers?*

*What are the words of those songs that they sing?—*

Songs that allure when I catch but a tone in them,

Songs of a singer already a-wing,

Songs of delight with a hint of a moan in them,

Faint as a breeze in a violin string.

Heigho—the fairies! that joy in devising me

Ever new lures to deprive me of rest!

Fairies that, mocking me, taunting, enticing me,

Start me afresh on my lunatic quest!

Woodland and briar-path, youthful and cheery,

Up from the valley and down from the hill;

Racing them—chasing them, gray-haired and weary;

Down to my grave I shall follow them still!



## BETTY'S BUTTERFLY

Baby Betty, plucking flowers  
From the grass before the door,  
Spied to-day a kind of blossom  
She had never seen before.

Betty's own eyes were not bluer  
Than the flower they smiled upon;  
Betty clapped her hands, delighted—  
And alas! the flower was gone!

Clovers, buttercups and daisies  
Meekly in their places stay;  
"Why," sweet Baby Betty pondered,  
"Did my blue flower fly away?"

Till at last she solved the problem,  
And the clovers overheard,  
"Oh, I thought it was a flower,  
"But I guess it was a bird!"

## ELIZABETH

*From the German of Theodor Storm*

Here on the noon-hushed hillside,  
The wind to rest beguiled,  
The leafy twigs hang drooping;  
Beneath them sits the child.

Amid the wild thyme's fragrance  
She sits; the perfumed air  
Is filled with insects, humming  
And glistening everywhere.

How silent lies the forest!  
How woodland-rapt her gaze!  
On her brown hair the sunshine  
A tender glory lays.

Far off—the cuckoo's laughter!  
I think, in still surprise,  
Her eyes are golden—golden,  
Like the Forest-Maiden's eyes!

## GOD'S NEW YEAR

God's New Year! Sing it soft, O happy birds!  
Why heed the cynic calendars that say  
In bitter wintertime falls New Year's day?

"In wintertime," they say, (heed not their words!)  
"New years are born,—in winter old years die,  
"North winds alike for dirge and lullaby."

To-day the year is new! when first the sun  
Awakes the languid earth to thrill and glow  
And put from her warm breast the shrouding  
snow.

To-day when free at last the glad brooks run,  
To-day when first the field-lark greets the  
morn—  
To-day with life, love, hope, the year is born!

## "FRUHLINGSNACHT"

Ah April, sweet April! the whole morning long  
The world was a riot of beauty and song!

The scent of white lilacs was warm on the breeze;  
The robin called loud from the little-leaved trees;

And meadow-larks thrilled their long flute-notes  
serene  
Through fields that were mad with a passion of  
green.

But now, in the night, when the birds are all  
still,  
And south winds are roving from hill unto hill,

The sweetest, the saddest, the tenderest strain  
That tells of spring rapture, is lifted again.

O scorned little bards! do your tiny souls yearn  
With some of our longing at springtime's re-  
turn?

Like us, are you seeking escape from flesh-  
bonds,  
O mournful, sweet choir of the marshes and  
ponds?

## THE SHORE LARK

*"Their flight and manner in song is much like that of the skylark. . . . I know of no bird-song that seems so obviously struggling to free itself and reach a fuller expression."*

*John Burroughs*

Thou simple minstrel of the hazy blue!

I saw thee mount on eager wing elate;

I saw thee dare yon azure heaven's gate,  
Like him, thy cousin Skylark, Shakespeare knew  
And watched long since, sun-blind, as I watch  
you.

I saw how thy swift wingings alternate

With blessed lulls, when thy blithe pinions  
wait,

For rapture stilled, until thy song be through.

And then, from that far, sunlit height I heard

Thy futile warble, poor and incomplete.

Why must thou dare the Skylark's realm, rash  
bird?

Poor lark—poor songless soarers, thou and I!

On earth, perchance, our strains had sounded  
sweet;

But ah, it called us, called us—the blue sky!

## BIRDS OF THE MIST

*The mists of Niagara are haunted by hundreds of  
swallows.*

O you who look down,  
Till your senses drown  
In the maddening, dizzying thunder and roar  
Of floods that, tumultuous, haste evermore  
To their falling—falling—falling;

You men who can only surmise  
What lies  
Forever shut out from your human eyes  
By the wavering mists that are seemingly free,  
But are chained to the rocks for eternity;

You creatures that shrink  
From the terrible brink  
Of the waters that curve of a sudden, and sink,  
And go down—down—down, to the chasm be-  
low,  
So wondrously, gracefully, buoyantly slow,  
'Tis an age till they're lost in the eddies of snow,  
Where the whirlpool is mightily calling;—  
Behold us—the birds of the mist!

Far up with the spray we blow!  
With its billowing clouds we arise,  
Till we see through the vapor the blue of the  
skies,  
And higher and higher the white mist springs,  
Till the sunshine is hot on our drenched wings!

Can you know, you who stay  
Where the fringe of the spray

Will but moisten your face if the wind is your  
way,  
Can you guess the mad joy that we feel,  
As we circle and wheel,  
As we flutter and soar  
Through the blinding mist  
By the torrent-bow kissed  
Into emerald, ruby and amethyst,  
That rises and broods o'er the wild uproar?

Close—close to the curve of the falls we fly,  
The smooth green curve with the touch that is  
doom;  
But we pay it no heed in our passing it by,  
Save to give it a wing's-breadth room.

We are mad with the joy of the falling!  
Glad sprites of the mist are we!  
All day we play,  
Delirious, free,  
In the leaping spray;  
All day we circle and soar,  
With shining, wet plumage and glistening  
breast;  
All day—all day—for we cannot rest  
In sight of the waters in white uproar,  
In the sound of the cataract's calling!

## THE EARLIEST

Chilly and cheerless the March breezes blow;  
Gray are the skies with a promise of snow;  
Never, ah never will old winter go!  
    Spring has forgotten to come!

Weary and sorrowful, dreary and long,  
Drags the cold winter, and life has gone wrong;  
Mourning for laughter, and silence for song;  
    Earth and her voices are dumb.

Truly the Father is hardest to find  
Days when the world is so cold and unkind,  
Days when our eyes that have seen, become  
    blind,  
    Days when our spirits are numb.

But lo!—on the silence and cheerlessness rings  
The meadow-lark's bell and the song-sparrow  
    sings,  
And a message of hope to the weary heart flings,  
From out the bare twig where he clings.

While, "Listen, poor mortal!" the bold robins  
    say,  
Brave-hearted and loud from the uppermost  
    spray,  
"The darkest of night is the dawn of the day,  
"And March is the brother of May!"

Then up from the orchard deserted and bare,  
The tenderest voice in the bird chorus there,



A bluebird trills on the frost-laden air,  
And warbles the slumberless care :

“You coward, oh hark to the song that I sing!  
“Soon cometh the time of the blossoming;  
“Soon cometh an end to your sorrowing;  
“And after the winter—the spring!

“And then shall all hunger and trouble and snow  
“All pain and all weariness, vanish and go!  
“Know ye the way that we bluebirds know?  
“‘Tis God who hath told us ‘tis so.”

Winds from the north, and the snow flurries fly,  
Chilly and raw from the dun-colored sky;  
Still fast asleep the blue violets lie;  
Tarrieth long the dear spring.

But out of a heart that was weary and worn,  
The grief on the wing of a bird has been borne,  
And mysoul sings as soft as the bluebirds sing,  
“Soon cometh the time of the blossoming!”

## BIRDLESS

This is the birdless season—empty trees,  
Bare orchard, lonely mead!  
Above the snow-drifts, gone-to-seed  
Dry weed-stalks rattle in the breeze,  
Where companies  
Of gay tree-sparrows twitter as they feed.

This is the birdless season. Clouds hang gray.  
Hued like the summer sky,  
With haughty crest and royal eye,  
Across the snow-glare of the day  
A splendid jay  
Wings to the spruces with his strident cry.

High o'er the lowland field a lone hawk wheels  
In watchful circles slow,  
And scans the lifeless plain below  
In anxious searching for his scanty meals.  
From far, there steals  
Upon the hush the cawing of a crow.

This is the birdless season! 'Neath the hedge  
The merry juncos meet  
To mine the snow with tiny feet  
In search of forage. From the sedge  
At the stream's edge,  
A tufted titmouse whistles loud and sweet.

Among the boughs, with soft contralto calls,  
Flits restless chickadee;  
And from the leafless maple-tree  
The rosy-plumaged cardinal's  
Fine rhapsody  
Of mellow, lyric sweetness blithely falls.

Nuthatches clamber o'er the lichen'd bark  
Of gnarly limbs, to seek  
Their prey, and curiously peek  
In mossy crevice, cranny dark;  
While near them—hark!  
The tap—tap—tapping of the downy's beak!

This is the birdless season—silent, drear?  
Ah leave your hearth's red glow,  
Your closet grief for choirs that go  
When summer roses disappear!  
Come forth—and hear  
This brave song-sparrow, singing in the snow!

### THE SPRING SONG

O friend of mine, whom the jealous miles  
Have crowded out from my daily sight—  
This memory comes in quiet whiles:  
A grove in the spring, in the young sunlight;

And you and I, where the hill-path led;  
And boughs that were turning a tender green  
On the old trees arching overhead;  
The glint of the morning sky between;

The spice-bush twigs ashine with dew;  
The thrushes at work in the wet, brown mold;  
And through the woods, and our own souls  
through,  
The voice of an unknown bird, that told

The joy of the spring that our hearts had known;  
As wild and simple and sweet and glad,  
With its hint of pain for an undertone,  
As the plaint of a wandering oread.

Across the hillside—among the trees,  
Till the morning sun rose high,  
We followed the song that on every breeze  
Was lifted, to linger, and pass us by;

But the hidden singer whose song had wrought  
Mysterious charm in the solitude,  
Eluded ever our eyes that sought  
For the prophet of our April mood.

Was it only the voice of an unseen bird,  
In matin hymns to the God of spring?  
Or was it the soul of the woods we heard,  
Giving voice to our silent worshipping?

O friend of mine! though the jealous miles  
May keep asunder you and me,  
If you remember, in quiet whiles,  
We meet in a mutual memory.

## THE ANGEL AND MY SONG

I said unto the Angel: "Shall I sing  
"Of Love, the wondrous?" "Hast thou loved?"  
he said.

"Not yet!" I answered; and he shook his head.

"Shall I then sing of Death, the pitiless?"

"What knowest thou of Death?" the answer  
came.

I bowed my head: "I have but heard his name.

"What wouldst thou, Angel? Shall I sing of God,  
"From whose great thought the universe is  
sprung?"

The Angel smiled. "How strong is thy lyre  
strung?"

"Then must I cease my singing?" "Nay," he said,  
"Thou canst not!" and he smiled again; "but  
lo!

"Thou shalt sing only that which thou dost  
know."

He vanished; and I took my lyre and sang—  
Sang, as the birds sing, of the things I knew:  
Of storms and stars; of Ocean's wind-swept  
blue;

I sang the freshness of the early morn;  
I sang of grass and trees and low-voiced  
streams;

I sang my hopes, my heart-beats and my  
dreams.

And when at last I dropped my quivering lyre,  
There stood my smiling Angel, and he leant  
And gave to me my fallen instrument.

“Sing now,” he said, “of Death! Of Love sing  
now!”

“Nay, Angel! for I know them not!” I cried;  
Then turned—and found them standing at my  
side!

And when I, knowing, had sung Death and  
Love,

“Sing now of God!” he bade me. “Nay,” I  
plead,

“Too frail my lyre is!” “Child!” he smiled and  
said,

“Hast thou then sung of Love and Death and  
stars—

“Hast thou then sung blue skies and springing  
sod,

“And dost thou dream thou hast not sung of  
God?”

## THE MYSTERY TALE

A marvelous work is the Tale of the World!  
It is wrought with a wonderful art,  
From the chapter on suns out of star-dust  
    whirled,  
To the one on the ache of a heart.

'Tis a novel—a romance—a mystery tale;  
And there's none but the Writer who knows  
How the wrong is to yield and the right to pre-  
    vail,  
As the plot hurries on to the close.

There are some who have read to the end of the  
    book,  
But they never glanced upward to tell  
How the mystery ends, though their sweet, calm  
    look  
Seems to warrant a hope that it ended well.

Was it *Finis* they read on the ultimate page?  
Was it *Endeth the first book so—?*  
But ah!—they are silent; and poet and sage  
Must read to the end to know!

## THE AWAKENING—AN IDYL OF SPRING

*Here in the forest wild,  
Silent the maiden lies,  
Sleep in her closéd eyes,  
Lifeless, the forest-child.  
Folded in garments white,  
Dreamless the maiden lies;  
Hush!—for all mysteries  
Sleep in her sleeping eyes.  
Passeth the night.*

Afar in the forest thrills  
The sound of a silver horn;  
A quiver the silence fills,  
Like wind in a field of corn.

Far distant, and sweet, and clear,  
It fades like a dream that dies;  
Unheeding, the maiden's ear—  
Unlifted, her drooping eyes.

*Dawneth a pallid light,  
Here where the forest wild  
Watches her sleeping child.  
Passeth the night.*

But lo!—through the twilight rings  
Yet closer the silver horn;  
A flush in the east upsprings—  
A radiant hint of morn!

“He cometh!” the cold wind sighs,  
That sweeps through the waning night;



"He cometh!" the darkness flies  
To hide from the face of light.

He is come! with the world aglow  
And dawn in the heavens red;  
He is come! and the frost and snow  
Have vanished beneath his tread.

*Sleeping the maiden lies,  
Snow-wreaths enfolding her,  
While he, beholding her,  
Startled, with tender eyes,  
Kneels at her side;  
Breathes a soft word to her,  
Whispers, unheard, to her;  
Bends o'er her, sorrow-wild,  
Harks for her breath;  
Mourns the unreconciled  
Beauty and death.  
Then, at love's bidding wise,  
Soft on her sleeping eyes  
Kissing her, "Wake!" he cries,  
"Thou, O my bride!"*

Sing, O ye birds, how all joys with her waken!  
Burst, O ye buds, in a glory of birth!  
Sweet let the bells of the lilies, wind-shaken,  
Ring the glad bridal of Springtime and Earth!

Past is the sleep of the maid in the forest wild;  
Gone is the snow from her slumbering breast;  
Over and done is the watch o'er the forest-child,  
Joy of her waking for peace of her rest!

Wind-flowers spring through their warm winter  
covering;

Violets hide in the grass at her feet;

"Love!" sings the bluebird on azure wing hovering;

Love is the gossip of breezes that meet.

Haste, O ye birds to the groves you've forsaken!

Sing, while buds burst in a passion of birth!

Sing, for all mysteries with her awaken,

Wake in the bridal of Springtime and Earth!

“FOR LO, THE WINTER IS PAST!”

Ho—you who are tired with the learning  
You have pondered all winter in vain,  
Come out! let the spring winds returning  
Blow the cobwebs away from your brain!

For books may be good in December,  
(Though the wiser man studies the snow)  
But only a fool would remember  
His books when hepaticas blow;

When the high-holder's clarion is voicing  
His gladness that spring is reborn;  
When Echo repeats the rejoicing  
Of the meadow-lark's silvery horn.

Have you squandered your birthright, O Brother?  
Here is life more abundant to live!  
Can the God who made sunlight do other  
Than bless and restore and forgive?

Come out, you men who are weary!  
For the joy of the springtime is here;  
And the old, sad questions and dreary,  
Belong to the rest of the year.

Here is peace in the quiver of grasses!  
By the smell of the leaves you are healed!  
And the love that all research o'erpasses,  
Has April declared and revealed!

## “WHERE IT LISTETH”

Oh hark! 'tis the midnight wind:  
Now sad as a soul that has sinned,

And rests not, night nor day,  
It hurries away—away—

From some gray, ghastly fear  
That follows in its rear;

Now hushed and soft and low,  
And lingering, wistful, slow,

Through the harp-voiced pines it drifts,  
Where the silver moonlight sifts;

Now off in a sudden change,  
Exultant and reckless and strange,

And wild with a weird delight,  
It courses down the night

And out and away o'er the fields,  
Where the young corn, bending, yields

To the strength of the shouting blast;  
Now rushing and hurrying past

It flattens the leagues of wheat,  
Till they lie like a floor at its feet;

Now out on the sea it sweeps,  
Where the moonlit water sleeps,

And I see the quick flaws run,  
By the moon that is white as the sun.

So it passes by and is gone,  
And the weary hours drag on,

And the moon shines as before  
Across my chamber floor,

As I turn to the silent gloom  
Of my spectre-haunted room,

And the stillness so profound  
That it throbs in my ears like sound.

From out the darkness sent,  
Again to the dark it went,

And I never can hope to find  
The house of the ghostly wind.

Only, on nights like these,  
I hear it in the trees,

And try to solve—in vain—  
The riddle of its pain,

Its rapture large and free,  
Its utter mystery.

## WITH THE NIGHTFALL

From grove and field the golden west recalls  
The last long sunbeams, and the shadow falls.  
A pewee whispers from the dusk of leaves;  
In some far wood a mourning-dove yet grieves;  
And through the quiet of the failing light,  
A lonely robin calls a clear good-night.

Good-night—good-night! So wistful, strange  
and sweet,  
So with old dreams and memories replete,  
This hour of passing, when another day  
The twilight folds all silently away.

Whence comes this sadness, dim and vague and  
vast—  
This echo of an unremembered past?  
This faint, far presage, as of future woes,  
That steals upon me as the daylight goes?

I know not. But, O God, may it not be  
That then the mortal feels mortality—  
That through the dark the flesh-bound spirit  
yearns  
Toward that immortal which it half discerns?

I know not. But I know I feel the power  
Of some strange, potent spell upon the hour—  
Some influence of sadness infinite,  
That shakes me in the robin's last good-night—  
Some longing, as the golden sunbeams die,  
That there is naught, on earth, to satisfy.

## DIRGE FOR SUMMER

"Summer's dead with all her roses, white and  
red!"

Moan the bleak winds of November; "Summer's  
dead!"

"Bare is all her leafy woodland. Snow-flakes fall,  
"Where, serene and sweet, her thrushes used to  
call."

"Summer's dead!" the fields unsightly seem to  
say;

"Come, O snow, and hide our nakedness away!"

"Summer's dead!" the winds are crying; "White  
and red

"Were her roses—they are dust, and she is dead!"

## MONOCHROME

A harmony of melancholy grays:

Gray earth, gray sky, gray meadow, hill and  
plain;

And in the heart gray thoughts of other days,  
Persistent as the gray November rain.

Gray earth, gray rain, gray sky, gray distant lea;  
Dead days come not again. Yet know, sad  
world,

It is the close-wrapped buds of Junes to be,  
That with gray tears for Junes that were are  
pearled!

## WHITE CLOVER

O you clover, blooming clover,  
Where the dusty gold-wing sips,  
Do you wonder why I pluck you,  
Hold you close against my lips?

Do you guess the reason, clover,  
For these bitter, bitter drops?  
Can a scorching rain be falling,  
When the sunshine never stops?

Ah, you cannot know, my clover,  
How the sight and smell of you  
Brings the memories a-thronging  
Of a home that once I knew;

With the clover in the orchard,  
And the humming honey-bees,  
And the wren's light-hearted singing  
In the rosy apple-trees;

With the love that bent above me,  
As the sunny heavens bend;—  
O you foolish, sweet, white clover,  
You can never comprehend!



## A ROSE FROM HOME

No more for me red Jacqueminots,  
Nor sweet La France, with pink leaves curled;  
But I will keep this wee white rose,  
That came to me across the world.

Across the world—ah little rose!  
By mountain pass and dusty plain,  
You came to say: "The vine still grows,  
"And waits for you to come again.

"And now the summer dreams o'er all;  
"The last fair, creamy buds uncloze,  
"And silken petals fluttering fall  
"In every gentle wind that blows;

"And June is sweet at home today—"  
Ah, but my heart already knows  
The whole of what you come to say,  
You little, white, Ohio rose!

## THE BROOK

"Hush—oh hush!"

The brooklet sings,

Murmuring through the long green grasses;

And each laughing ripple tosses

O'er the dripping velvet mosses

Sunlit diamonds as it passes.

"Hush—ah hush!"

My brooklet sings.

"Hush—oh hush!"

My brooklet sings;

And the grasses droop to listen;

And the waving fern leaves, bending,

Hark the murmur never-ending,

Of the waves that glint and glisten.

"Hush—ah hush!"

The brooklet sings.

"Hush—oh hush!"

The brooklet sings,

With such sweet, persistent chiding,

That, all worldly noise unheeding,

I obey its tender pleading,

Lie and dream, while, softly gliding,

"Hush—ah hush!"

My brooklet sings.

## A PRAYER

Thou, O Father, thought it best  
From my ken to take Thy light;  
Left me lying, without rest,  
Staring, wide-eyed, into night.

By the lonely gloom of doubt  
I am frightened, like a child  
When the lamp is carried out  
And he cries, unreconciled,

Till his soothing mother steals  
To his side and comfort brings,  
While across the dark he feels  
For her hand and to it clings.

So I, Father, cry to Thee!  
I ask not to understand —  
Take the lamp; but come to me  
Through the dark and hold my hand.

## EASTER LILIES

I rose, and took my sorrow  
Unto God's house to-day;  
I knelt below the chancel  
And tried to weep or pray.

Above me, round about me,  
The organ's triumph rang;  
And "Risen—He is risen!"  
A thousand voices sang.

As in a dream I heard them;  
I saw, as in a dream,  
Red lights across the chancel  
From painted windows stream.

And then at last was silence,  
And all were gone away;  
But still in the cathedral  
I knelt and tried to pray.

Was there no comfort for me?  
No answer anywhere?  
No sign a God was with me,  
To save me from despair?

No sign?—mine eyes were lifted!  
I saw them, pure and pale—  
The holy Easter lilies,  
Behind the altar-rail.

O ranks of Easter lilies!  
O lilies tall and white,  
Faint-touched from chancel windows  
With gleams of crimson light!—

Beyond all priestly wisdom  
The silence of your speech!  
Your beauty helped the heart-ache  
That music could not reach!

Then doubt and bitter anguish  
A moment drew away;  
My tears shut out the lilies  
At last, and I could pray.

### "HE GIVETH SNOW"

All day the dreary, wintry rain came down  
From sullen skies to meadows sodden, brown;  
And all day long the cold rain, merciless,  
Beat on the shrinking forest's nakedness.

Till, with the evening, came from storm surcease,  
As if a voice had spoken, saying, "Peace!"  
And straight the rain stopped, and the healing  
snow  
Began to fall in great flakes white and slow.

And then the sad wind ceased its weary sound  
Through dead leaves still to lifeless branches  
bound;  
And o'er the trees a solemn quiet crept,  
As if the Mother soothed them and they slept.

All day upon my soul fierce passion's blast  
Fell pitiless; gray sin-clouds overcast  
My rain-dark sky; till with the evening—lo!  
There fell a great white peace, like healing snow.

## NOT HIS THE SILENCE

O you whose doubt I know, whose pain I share!  
Who cry into the night if God be there,  
And wait, and listen, till the silence seems  
As empty and as meaningless as dreams!  
Across my soul-dark shines a ray of light—  
A silver star upon the void of night.  
If there be comfort in it, take the thought:

Through countless years an unknown worker  
wrought,  
Till lo! we see the sunrise—hear the wind—  
Behold Creation—guess the God behind!  
Long ages more the Laborer will need  
To give us soul-eyes, that we see indeed;  
Long ages more, before our dullard ears  
Shall catch the music of the quiring spheres.

Be still, O crying souls! I think He hears  
The bitter falling of our midnight tears;  
Yearns pitiful above the infant, Man;  
Awaits the patient progress of His plan  
Within the soul that now in anguish cowers;—  
Not His the silence, but the deafness ours!

## EASTER

Oh come, you weary-hearted!  
Put by your grief an hour!  
For see! along the highroad  
The maples are in flower.

The willows are unsheathing  
Their catkins' velvet gray;  
The lilac buds are swelling;  
The air is soft as May.

From out the brown mold springing,  
The crocus lifts her head;  
Lo!—all things fair and lovely  
Are rising from the dead.

Of love the bluebird warbles;  
Of faith the sparrow sings;  
And through the robin's joyance  
The hope of Easter rings.

Come out, you weary-hearted!  
Lay down your winter fears!  
Here wait the winds of April  
To dry your winter tears!

## THE WILD ROSE

The day was fair as a day can be,  
And the wind blew fresh from a joyous sea,  
When he gathered a rose for her hand to hold,  
A wild pink rose with a heart of gold.  
Ah me—the rose!

And lest a thorn her hand should tear,  
He plucked them away with a laughing care:  
“O Love! my love shall as thornless be  
“As the wild sweet rose that I give to thee,  
“The sweet wild rose with the heart of gold!”  
Ah me—his love!

The shadows fell that day by the sea,  
And the wind blew soft and gloomily;  
And she had no words when he kissed her there,  
A careless kiss on her red-gold hair;  
And she had no words when he said good-bye,  
Though the whole of her heart was an aching  
cry—  
The desolate cry of a love untold  
For the poor, light lover she could not hold.  
Ah me—her love!

The shadows fell on the joyous sea,  
And the dying wind blew mournfully,  
While the night in lonely darkness spread,  
And the cold stars shining overhead  
Looked down on the sweet rose lying dead;  
(Poor thornless rose, with your heart of gold!)  
And her hands were whole—but the thorns in-  
stead  
Had torn her heart till it ached and bled.  
Ah me—the thorns!



## THE DEATH OF THE WIND

Oh I was the Wind last night !  
And I rode a sailless sea,  
In the wildest delight,  
While the moon was white,  
And the mermaidens frolicked with me !

Oh I was the Wind last night !  
And across the land I fled,  
Like a sorrowing soul  
With a secret dole  
And a voice that was hollow with dread.

Oh I was the Wind last night,  
Till I found your garden, Sweet!  
Then I swooned to a breeze  
Through your lilac-trees,  
And I died of my love at your feet.

## A MIDSUMMER LAMENT

The pebbly bed of the brook is dry,  
Where we used to wander, Dear!  
And the sun shines white in the blazing sky,  
And the ferns all brown and withering lie,  
In the hot noon of the year.

I stroll in our old ravine alone,  
But the woods are sadly still,  
For I miss the brook's low undertone,  
As it rippled and laughed over root and stone,  
And I miss your voice's thrill.

In the spring, when the banks of the little stream  
Overflowed, like our hearts with love,  
Through the tiny leaves fell the sunlight's gleam,  
And the world was clad in a golden dream,  
With the sky of hope above.

And the dragon-fly—you remember, I know,  
How he hovered on frail blue wing  
Where the loving alders bent more low,  
And the brook half paused, ran still and slow,  
And the shy birds came to sing;—

The dragon-fly came back to-day  
As if he remembered too;  
But the place was changed, and he would not  
stay,  
But veered on a sudden and darted away,  
For he missed the brook and you.

## A NOCTURNE

From the midnight sky the starlight,  
Lingering, through her window creeps;  
O'er her dreaming  
Faintly streaming  
Benedictions while she sleeps.

From the garden to her lattice,  
From a hundred flowers arise  
Odors stealing  
And revealing  
Hidden sweet that in them lies.

Never sound of voice or music  
On the sacred stillness breaks;  
Night the holy  
Watches solely—  
Watches silent, till she wakes.

## HE DOES NOT KNOW

On the warm brown sand of the beach they sit;  
The tall grass shades them, as, whispering low,  
It bends to the breeze that is saying to it,  
"He does not know—he does not know!"

The lake lies calm in the glad sunlight,  
And the waves that ripple and ebb and flow,  
Call—call, till they fill her soul with fright  
Lest he hear their calling, "He does not know!"

He does not know! and the sweet hours glide  
Down the pitiless west where all sweet hours  
go;  
And the hope that was born at the dawn has died,  
And the night has come—and he does not  
know.

## A MEMORY OF JUNE

Here under the shade of the orchard trees  
I am fanned by the breath of each wandering  
breeze,

And, rocked in my hammock, I sway to and fro,  
While the wind whispers lullabies, softly and low.

I close my eyes, and I hear once more  
The ripples that break on a pebbly shore;

The hammock sways—and again I float  
With you, dear heart, in a wingéd boat;

And the blue of the wave and the blue of the  
skies,  
Shines back to me from your soulful eyes.

O days of June, when we sailed away  
From the cares and the pains of the every-day—

We have left you behind, like the bubbles afloat  
In the wake that was left by our wingéd boat!

## AN HUMBLE VALENTINE

In olden times, when ladies fair  
Were wont to drive men to despair,  
And rivaled with their own bright eyes  
All tricks Dan Cupid could devise;

All loving swains, upon this day,  
In dainty verse and love-lorn lay  
Were wont to voice their sad complaint  
And beg the aid of our good Saint.

In modern times, alas! though I  
May vainly bite my pen and try  
To find some new and witty word  
To tell the tale you've often heard,

I cannot find a single rhyme  
That's not been used full many a time;  
And all the endearing terms I'd pour  
Have served the purpose oft before.

But, lady, though your lover's plea  
May want originality,  
Scorn not, for that, the faithful heart  
That lacks, not loyalty, but art.

Go search the good Saint's archives through,  
And think each love note's writ to you;  
Then know, they cannot half express  
My ardour or your loveliness!

## IN THE RAIN

In the edge of the wood she was standing—  
I saw her quite plain;  
There was nothing between but the misty gray  
curtain of rain,  
When I saw her, my dryad, whose face I shall  
ever remember,  
Though seeing it never again.

In the edge of the wood she was standing;  
One hand, lily-white,  
On the bole of a hoary old beech laid a pressure  
as light  
As the touch of a snow-flake adrift on a night of  
December;  
So paused she a space in her flight.

In the edge of the wood she was standing;  
She smiled at me there,  
And I saw that her eyes were sea-blue 'neath the  
wind-driven hair,  
And I saw while she lingered,—alas, I shall ever  
remember—  
She more than a mortal was fair.

In the edge of the wood she was standing,  
Her garments wind-blown;  
And I heard through the rain a low music, half  
laugh and half moan,  
And she held out her arms ere she vanished,—  
that much I remember!  
I stood in the rain, all alone.

## TO A DRAGON-FLY

O dragon-fly!—you fragile-winged  
And restless creature of the air!  
How like you are to happiness—  
As changeful and as fair!

Upon yon water-lily leaf,  
Where silver globes like tear-drops run,  
You light to rest, your azure wings  
A-glitter in the sun,

For one sweet instant; then away  
To greener fields and pastures new!  
While all day long the lonely leaf  
Must dream and dream of you;

Until, perchance, with filmy wings  
Stained crimson by the sunset light,  
You wander back at eventide,  
In aimless, zigzag flight,

To dart—to hover—and to veer!  
To light on that glad leaf again,  
That patient waits, as we must wait,  
Her chance of joy or pain!



## A FAREWELL

The Day, departing, with reluctant feet  
Steals slowly o'er the rustling grasses sweet;  
And Twilight, dusky harbinger of Night,  
Down dew-wet valleys comes with footsteps  
light.  
Among the whispering leaves the night breeze  
sighs;  
Far on yon mist-wreathed hills the rose light  
dies;  
The tide creeps murmuring o'er the darkening  
shore,  
And thou—sweet Day!—art gone, forevermore.

No more, O Day of days, shalt thou be born  
In all the ruddy splendor of thy morn;  
No more shall every bird its carol raise  
To welcome thee, O thou sweet Day of days!  
No more shalt thou thy kindly noon-light throw  
Upon the joyous summer fields below;  
The waves creep, sobbing, o'er the lonely shore,  
And thou art gone—art gone forevermore.

Though other days, as fair as thou, should rise  
From out the radiant clouds of eastern skies,  
And fairy hours, with mellow laughter sweet,  
Dance other days away with steps as fleet;  
Yet something, with thy last, faint, waning light,  
Thou'st borne from me into eternal night.  
The sad waves sigh upon the silent shore,  
And thou, sweet Day—farewell, forevermore!

## GREAT SALT LAKE

So still it lies, it seems a pictured dream,  
Left over from an unremembered past;  
On it no flying clouds their shadows cast,  
Nor ripple stirs, nor hov'ring sea-fowl scream.

More blue it is than is the azure sky  
That bends above its smooth, unheaving breast;  
And far across its waters, to the west,  
Dim purple hills along the distance lie.

Still as the world was ere it felt God's breath;  
Mid salt gray deserts far as eye can see,  
It sleeps in utter, lifeless mystery,  
As strange and bright and wonderful as death.

## FROM THE DARK

Awake for me out of the darkness, ivory keys!  
For lo!—I have stolen away from the laughter  
and light;  
I have come to you, seeking the charm that my  
fettered soul frees,  
And lifts from my spirit the burden of silence  
and night.

Oh speak to me tenderly, little ones! soothe into  
rest  
All the clamorous thoughts of the day that is  
over and done,  
Till they sink into quiet as gently as sinks in the  
west,  
Into healing sweet comfort of darkness, the  
road-weary sun.

Now the twilight of revery folds me about, and  
the sky  
Grows darker and deep with the hope of the  
still, white stars;  
And the lights of the town, stealing up to my  
choir-loft, lie  
On the gray dusk above me in golden, tremu-  
lous bars.

I am lifted away from the glare of the quivering  
street,  
Where the night is repeating the wearisome  
round of the day;  
The clanging of bells and the sound of the pass-  
ing of feet,  
To a mellow, half musical monotone dwindles  
away.

It is peace that I seek, all the day's fret and fever  
to heal.

How cool, little brothers, your touch in the  
evenlight seems!

I have fled in a weary revolt from the things that  
are real,

From the desolate ocean of truth to the haven  
of dreams.

---

Ah hush, speak soft! Do you hear it?—the swell  
of the wind

That is sweeping the dark of the myriad, mur-  
muring leaves?

Do you hear their low laugh, as they lean to each  
other to find

If any's so fond that his vagabond tales she be-  
lieves?

How strong and untroubled and steadfast the  
aged trees rise,

And the peace of the unheeded centuries sil-  
ently hold!

There are odors abroad in the forest: mysterious  
sighs

From the bursting of buds, and the fresh, leafy  
smell of the mold;

And, poignantly sweet, is the breath of acacia  
flowers

Now passing—now passed, on the wings of a  
hurrying breeze;

Spring noises arise from the dusk of the deep  
ferny bowers,

Then still them again in the harkening hush  
of the trees.

Oh let me creep closer, great Mother! The spell  
of your rest  
Is upon me, my eyelids are heavy and droop-  
ing with sleep,  
And I fain would lie down all the night on your  
soft-heaving breast,  
Half hearing, half feeling, through slumber too  
sweet to be deep,

How the slow, solemn hours of the night through  
the forest ways go,  
And the stars journey on down the infinite vast  
of the skies,  
And, swaying my vine-woven curtains, the night  
winds blow,  
And the darkness, like gentle, cool hands, on  
my tired brow lies.

---

Then—silence. The music grows faint, and my  
forest dream ends  
With my fingers at rest on the keys in the soft-  
folding gloom;  
And the steps ever pass and repass, and the  
street glare ascends  
In a tremulous glimmer of gold through the  
dusk of the room.

Through the dark still acquiver with visions, my  
pulses beat fast  
At the thrill of your passionate yielding, O  
keys, to my need;  
But the pitiful sound of the poor, tired feet going  
past,  
Cries up an eternal sad question—a riddle to  
read.

Why is it, O sweet my consolers, that it is for  
me

Your secrets are kept with their potent and  
tender release?

Are they longing less bitterly, down in the street,  
to be free

Than I, who above in my choir-loft overtake  
peace?

Am I favored of God o'er my fellows? Are they  
to stay blind

While for me are glad visions—while I speak,  
are they to be dumb?

Shall I joy then in this my preferment, say God  
is so kind

That he gives me permission to enter where  
all may not come?

Cry—cry out against it, strong voices! Prefer-  
ment were shame

Were this the whole truth of the riddle; far  
better to sink

To a level of common endurance: to halt with  
the lame,

With the blind to be blind, with the dreary my  
sorrow-dregs drink.

Were this the whole truth of the riddle!—ah mas-  
terful keys,

How you sweep to a solemn crescendo of tri-  
umph and might!

Till the darkness of doubting is pierced, and my  
rapt soul sees

That the throng of the still white stars in the  
sky is alight.

And the riddle reads thus: my preferment nor  
shame is nor crown.

I am favored not over my fellows, except that  
from this,  
The uplift of my passion-sweet dreams, I may  
better look down  
And see all of life in its fulness of heart-break  
and bliss;

Till wisdom shall grow out of wonder, and love  
out of pain,  
And a nobler unrest in the place of my rest-  
lessness spring;  
Till I know, O my keys, that I seek for your sol-  
ace in vain,  
If only the wounds in myself to your healing I  
bring.

I must grieve with the grief of all men, with their  
weariness droop;  
I must carry their sins with my own at the  
times when I pass  
Down the dim, hushed aisles of the dream-  
groves, where I may stoop  
And bury their burdens with mine in the flow-  
er-sown grass.

Oh terrible joy of expression! to lift in one's  
hands  
All the weight of world-anguish, to feel its  
keen stir in the breast;  
To voice the least part of the yearning of ages  
that stands  
As the sign of Man's striving from good unto  
better and best!

Lie quiet, O keys, in the dusk, while the echoes  
that start  
Into tender vibrations, the silence reluctantly  
stills.  
I go down to the light and the laughter with  
peace in my heart,  
Like children, with hands full of wind-flow-  
ers, back from the hills.



*Come forth to the fields! where a better book lies  
Wide open forever to him that hath eyes:  
A book that contains all that's sacred and true;  
A book that is old but eternally new;  
A book in whose pages no problem you'll find  
Save the problem of Life and the God that's be-  
hind;  
A book in whose lines are all things fresh and  
fair—  
The crystalline waters, the bird-haunted air,  
The stars of the sky and the roses of June,  
The lilt of the morning, the hush of the noon,  
The thunderous waves of the rock-girdled seas,  
The drifting of clouds and the tossing of trees;  
All these—all these—  
Are written large in the book I love best,  
That I seek again as the bird its nest  
When my brain is tired and my heart grows cold  
Toward our pitiful books that are bought and  
sold!  
For the books of the day may be sound and sweet;  
In the midst of the tares there is much that is  
wheat;  
But the Book of All Time, in the sky and the sod  
Was written—by none but the fingers of God!*













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# A HILL PRAYER.

Marian Warner Wildman